



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DMHMRSAS WORKS TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR MULTICULTURAL INDIVIDUALS**

**RICHMOND** – As part of a continuing effort to improve access to services for multicultural individuals with intellectual and behavioral disabilities across the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) will hold a three-day conference next week:

**Wednesday, September 10 – Friday, September 12, 2008**  
Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel & Waterfront Conference Center, 425 Water Street  
Portsmouth, Virginia

“Central to providing culturally competent care is understanding how someone is shaped by their identification in groups like race, language, gender, and even homelessness and survival of violence,” said James Reinhard, M.D., DMHMRSAS commissioner. “This conference will help its nearly 350 participants further enhance their ability to reach and support individuals from different groups, leading to better mental health, intellectual disability and substance-use services across the commonwealth.”

The conference, titled, “The Journey Continues: Promoting and Achieving Cultural and Linguistic Competence,” is sponsored by DMHMRSAS, the Workforce Advisory Council and the Cultural & Linguistic Competency Steering Committee. The event will build on last year’s conference to integrate cultural competency models into ongoing service delivery. Nearly 350 administrators, clinicians, and caregivers will learn about improving services and access for Virginia’s diverse population, more effectively managing a diverse workforce and promoting a multicultural work place.

An overview of the conference agenda is as follows:

- *September 10, 9:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m. – Opening remarks by Commissioner Reinhard, State Senator Louise Lucas and Portsmouth mayor James Holley, and keynote from Dr. King Davis, former DMHMRSAS commissioner.*
- *September 11, 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m. – Keynote from Tawara Goode, director of the National Center for Cultural Competence.*
- *September 12, 9 a.m.-2p.m – Keynote address from Michael Gillette, president of Bioethical Services of VA, luncheon address by Nikki Giovanni, distinguished professor, Virginia Tech, and closing remarks from Commissioner Reinhard.*

More information on the conference and agenda can be found at [www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/OHRDM-WDI-2008.htm](http://www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/OHRDM-WDI-2008.htm).

Also, DMHMRSAS established a new Office of Cultural & Linguistic Competency in August 2008, led by director Cecily Rodriguez. This office will lead efforts to provide improved services to multicultural consumers and will work toward eliminating the disparities within the state’s mental health, intellectual disability and substance-use disorder system. For more information about this new office, please visit [www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/OHRDM-CLC.htm](http://www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/OHRDM-CLC.htm).

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*Available to citizens statewide, Virginia’s public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of 40 community services boards (CSBs) and 16 state facilities. DMHMRSAS seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for these individuals with mental health, mental retardation or substance abuse disorders.*

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